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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: Women's role in equal participation in conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution and peace-building

Statement submitted by Africa Muslims Agency and Muslim World League, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria, International Islamic Committee for Woman and Child, International Islamic Charitable Organization, International Islamic Relief Organization, International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, International Muslim Women's Union, Islamic Relief, and Qatar Charitable Society, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2004/1.

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Foreword:

Despite the efforts exerted by the UN and its institutions in order to help the world's peoples; especially the least developed ones and those inflicted with crises, the international organization has started, a fairly long time ago, to drafting a number of agreements and treaties, of which core is to propagate and impose a single cultural pattern upon the different countries of diverse cultures all over the world.

This clearly contradicts with one of the major roles of the UN to preserve cultural differences rather than shaping all people according to one way of living. In this context, the UN puts the pressure of financial aids and sanctions on poor countries to accept such agreements.

The Coalition of Islamic Organizations (***CIO***) overall view about the report written by the DAW on "Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building":

The ***CIO*** presents its view about some of the major issues related to Arab and Muslim women and tries to offer alternatives that better express women' needs and cultural values in their Arab and Muslim environment.

This view is based on the following:

1. Men-women cooperation rather than conflict:

The essence of men-women relationship in the Islamic view is based on cooperation and integration and never on conflict. Marriage relationship is based on the cooperative building of the family as a social institution in which rights originate from cooperation and support rather than conflict and diminishing other's right.

2. The rule of grace and tolerance between men and women:

Islam views the relationship between people, men and women, as one based on grace, forgiveness, and leniency aiming to get a stronger social building. This view is greatly different from the western approach where each party insists on getting the best of his rights at the expense of the other.

3. Collective rather than individual formula of rights and duties:

The Islamic perspective views the society as a structure based on collectivity rather than individualism. It sees the individual in the framework of his presence in a group. Due to this view, rights in Islam are usually presented in the form of duties. Thus, the wife's rights in the family are determined by marriage duties; the son's right in his father's outlay is presented as the duty of the father to spend on this child. Likewise, one neighbor's right is determined by the duty of the other toward him and so on.

This understanding usually incites the individual toward giving rather than taking. This is similar to how the legal secular theory, sometimes, expresses right as an obligation.

4. The balance of rights and duties and not the zero sum equation:

Since conflict is the ruling base on the relationship between man and woman in the western view, and since legal relationships are individually based, this vision leads to "zero sum" type of relationship where one's gains are the other losses. Each individual tries, as much as he can, to maximize his own gains and minimize the losses (i.e.: his duties toward others). This view contradicts the Islamic one, which is based on a balanced form of rights and duties between men and women.

The ***CIO*** detailed view about the report :

CIO supports many of what was mentioned in the report submitted by the DAW on Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building as follows:

- It accepts endeavors for the denial of war with its three axes: stopping war, post-war reconstruction and the forbiddance of the renewal of war. The committee also accepts the characteristic role of women in war, rather than men, as she is one of the big losers in wars and one who really pays for destruction. The essence of this characteristic role is to provide women with all ways and means of protection against the effects of war.
- The committee agrees with the logic of the report that is satisfied by putting "broad framework" and leaving each country to add the details convenient to its own local culture. In this respect, ***CIO*** asserts the importance of giving more concern to Muslim women issues all over the world. This is because women are the most attacked during wars, whether due to discrimination or ethnic punishments. Muslim women have dual specific identities- as a woman and as a Muslim. Thus, Muslim women living in areas inflicted with wars and in refugee camps must have extra protection since they are targeted twice.

Therefore, there must be full support for the women Islamic organizations. They must get their chance to fully participate in decision making and their viewpoints about the suggested solutions or about the demands that they call for must be respected whether they are moral demands to respect their concepts or rituals and religion. Thus, there must be full awareness of the importance of the Muslim women's cause in areas of conflict whether of war or in the refugee camps.

CIO also supports the report in banning all laws that are meant to exempt war criminals or that present them with post-war immunity by which they can evade the laws of justice.

***CIO* has the following reservations about some of the issues presented in this final report:**

- To view all women's issues and problems worldwide from a gender perspective which is refused by most of Muslim women in the world. This is because it inherently includes the western view as a way of life. It has two drawbacks:

First; the globalization of the western view beyond its geographical borders despite the fact that it only presents the point of view of a "group" of people not "all" the people.

Second; the imposition of this "view" by using the UN as a legal means for this.

- The report assumes that the equation that governs man-woman relationship is the zero sum equation of conflict. This means that one's gains are the other's net losses. This is exactly the western concept of life as a whole. Therefore, when the report discusses returning to pre-conflict situation, it quickly states that this is not an aim in itself. Rather, what is needed is "a social change and women empowerment, regardless of where justice lies. Bringing the situation back to its just origin must be the aim rather than increasing men-women conflicts.
- ***CIO*** has reservation about the high correlation that always happens between the concept of gender and all peace processes to be made.

This correlation needs to be reconsidered. It proves a hypothesis that the aim is net "women's interest", despite their different cultural frameworks but rather the imposition and domination of a specific view about life and existence. This view is not necessarily accepted by many of the world's peoples; especially those who have different cultural and life patterns not in harmony with the western views and values. The report states in many parts that its main goal is to guarantee that gender equality and women full participation in post-conflict society is effectively included as one of the goals of peace agreements and women full participation in post-conflict society. The report attempts to impose special human rights philosophy whether it previously appeared in the CEDAW, CRC or BEIJING agreements. These are agreements and

conventions about which there are many Islamic reservations. They also link between this philosophy and women participation in peace agreements.

- The report states that "The parties shall accept or confirm their acceptance of all UN applicable regional instruments for the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular those that specifically guarantee the rights of women and girls" (CEDAW and its optional protocol, CRC and its Optional Protocol and Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action).

In this respect, there is a contradiction between stating that legal and cultural peculiarities must be preserved, as stipulated in the UN charter , and the attempts to impose fixed patterns presented by many UN agreements and reports that stress stereotyping people applied regardless of their peculiarities.